DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 344 234 CS 213 303

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TITLE WAC Politics: Winning Friends and Influencing People.
PUB DATE 20 Mar 92
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (43rd, Cincinnati, OH, March 19-21, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Cooperation; Higher Education; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Politics of Education; Program Administration; Program Descriptions; Program Implementation; *Writing Across the Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS Rider College NJ

ABSTRACT

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs can become institutionalized by recognizing resources and accommodating to what is a matter of programmatic self-interest. Rider College in Lawrenceville, New Jersey (a mid-size, private comprehensive institution) has established a program to train faculty in WAC. Suggestions that may be useful to those beginning or struggling to institutionalize WAC programs include: (1) select WAC leadership cannily; (2) situate the program advantageously in the institutional structure; (3) get a separate budget; (4) recruit WAC participants strategically; (5) make common cause with compatible programs and valuable persons; (6) advertise shamelessly; (7) formulate program goals consistent with constituents' goals and overall institutional mission by appealing to individual faculty and entering into partnerships with other departments to work toward school goals. The results of campus-wide dialogues on WAC at Rider College have been so successful that, together, WAC staff, the English department, and the joint college-wide faculty/administration core curriculum committee have recommended that WAC be formally institutionalized by having writing requirements for graduation embedded in the disciplines and across the disciplines. (RS)

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WAC POLITICS

Winning Friends and Influencing People

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Talk prepared for presentation at
Conference on College Composition and Communication

Cincinnati, Ohio
March 20, 1992

CS213303

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WAC Politics: Winning Friends and Influencing People

The subtitle for our entire session on institutionalizing Writing Across the Curriculum, "Cast Down Your Bucket Where You Are," derives from a parable which is the rhetorical centerpiece of African-American educator Booker T. Washington's famous--or infamous, as critics would have it--Atlanta Exposition Address in 1895.

> A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortuate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water; send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River.

Washington used this parable to point up his call for economic comity between black and white races in the post-Reconstruction South. Praised at first for his statesmanship, he was subsequently excoriated for justifying the separate-but-equal socio-legal doctrine and for accommodationism, generally.

Notwithstanding the 20th century bad press given the Atlanta Exposition Speech, I would like to borrow Washington's parable. I like it for its own sake--the notion that we might miraculously find fresh water "where [we] are," for all the appearance of ubiquitous brine. And I like Washington's chutzpah. In a sensitive rhetorical context, speaking to an audience of influencial whites in the post-Reconstruction South, he managed with the sleight-of-hand of the parable to cast himself in the role of the experienced sea caption sending injunctions across the space between ships. I like that empowerment: sending injunctions. As experienced captain on a friendly vessel, I would like to send injunctions to you on how relatively powerless WAC programs might establish and maintain themselves in institutional contexts dominated by a majority culture of discipline-centered departments and schools. Using our own institutional experience as illustration, I would like to propose, Washington-like, how WAC programs might become institutionalized by:

1. **Recognizing resources**, the fresh Amazonian current "where you are"--in your own institutional context;
2. **Accommodating to what IS** as a matter of programmatic self-interest, but also for the larger institutional interest.

Our context, Rider College in Lawrenceville, New Jersy, is a mid-size private comprehensive institution organized in traditional academic departments and four schools--of Business, Education, Liberal Arts and Science, and Continuing Studies. We have 3100 full-time undergraduates, 2600 part-time and graduate students, 200 full-time, and 75-80 adjunct faculty. Faculty carry a four-course load [to change Fall 1993] and are expected to be active scholars and campus citizens as well. Nevertheless, over the past five years, half of our faculty have volunteered to participate in a demanding year-long WAC training program. Rider has only a modest endowment. It is predominantly tuition-driven, and thus, of necessity, rigorously cost-sensitive. We were fortunate enough to receive, before grant funds for WAC began to dry up, a generous New Jersey Higher Education grant for $175,000 to launch an intensive three-year program (1987-1989), but Rider College, first as pledged grant support, then entirely by its own choice has committed a third of a million dollars to support one-course time-release for WAC training, time-release for WAC staff, follow-up workshops, consultant's fees, travel, and other program expenses. We expect continued funding next year of $70,000 to train 14 more faculty and continue follow-up activities. There was, in sum, plenty of fresh water in the form of institutional support when we cast down our buckets. The program has far exceeded our original hopes and projections.

As we reflect back upon how we got so lucky (we surely didn't have infallible wisdom in advance), a few suggestions occur to us which might be useful to those of you just beginning or struggling to institutionalize your WAC programs. Here they are--injunctions across the water.

Injunction 1. Select WAC Leadership Cannily:

First, choose leadership with **campus political experience**. I wish I could tell you that I had qualified as WAC Director because I was expert in WAC theory and practice. In fact, like many of us, I was a conventional literature Ph.D. with no writing training whatsoever except for on-the-job composition teaching. I was asked by the English Department chair to "volunteer" because he mistrusted the only bona fide volunteer. My real qualification turned out to be extensive experience in campus collective bargaining. As chief negotiator for two contracts, I knew the structure, knew the personalities, knew where real power and decision-making lay. That background was invaluable. If you as

WAC director don't have it, affiliate or consult with someone who does. And, it goes without saying, if you, like me, are not educated in writing theory and practice, educate yourself fast so that you will have academic credibility and run your program responsibly. Read, attend CCCC and other conferences, talk to WAC Network people about WAC bibliography and program designs.

Second, don't work alone. "It was nice to talk to you," writes a solo program director with whom I exchange ideas.

> I wish I had some colleagues like you right here, I wouldn't feel so isolated. But I guess that's life when you are into changing the world, sometimes you have to go a little ways alone.

Don't go alone. **Get a good partner**. After five slumberous years under me alone, our program took off when I found an enthusastic, committed person to work with. **Recruit a staff**. Include on your staff representatives of important constituencies--in our case, the Schools of Business and Education.

Third, have someone among the leadership with **power and position**--or, minimally, tenure. WAC leadership is sometimes assigned to the relatively powerless, who are not positioned to cajole vice presidents and deans to put out resources for what they might perceive as a marginal program or to strongarm colleagues to join the program. Two WAC directors with whom I commiserate as they labor heroically, alone, against the odds, are a graduate student and a lecturer on soft money who received her termination notice this spring.

Injunction 2: Situate the Program Advantageously in the Institutional Structure

Our program spent its first five years as an appendage to the English Department. We reported, first, to the English Department chair, ultimately to the Dean of Liberal Arts. Bad idea. That affiliation compounds the effect of English faculty leadership to reinforce the prejudice that writing equals English. We lobbied successfully to report to the Associate Provost, the immediate assistant to the Academic Vice President. That placement gave us direct access to administrative power and closeness to the budget committee. It emphasized campus-wide ownership of the program.

Injunction 3: Get Your Own Budget

A related declaration of independence from English is budget. Have your own. Even if it is miniscule, fight to get your own. Money is power, but more important, budgeting permits program emphases independent of pre-existing priorities of an established host department.

I was tempted to make this injunction "**GET MONEY**." which I do advise, but thought that tantalizingly cruel to shout in the current financial environment. But if you can get even a little money, buy some time for yourselves to lead the program, budget for photocopying and a newsletter, and do something for your participants--give a small honorarium for attending workshops, give a WAC book, buy them lunch. If you can find a grant or you have a generous and enlightened administration like ours, buy time for your participants as well as for yourselves (our one-course time release was crucial to running an intensive program), provide for leaders' travel--to CCCC and other developmental conferences, hire good consultants.

Injunction 4: Recruit WAC Participants Strategically

Make your early recruits the best ones. Be choosy. Issue special invitations. Flatter, coax--not the faculty who need "fixing" the most, as you might think, but the ones who are already the best and will give the program good press. The enthusiasm and fresh ideas of good faculty will spread. And the best ones are the easiest for the novice director to learn from. Seventeen of our current 97 WAC faculty are Lindback teaching award winners; nine of these seventeen participated in the first two years of training.

Include campus leaders. The Associate Provost to whom we report was in the first group of year-long trainees. Thus she knew the program thoroughly from the outset and is a powerful advocate. Also among our first group of 22 were six department chairs and an assistant dean. Overall, we have enrolled seventeen department chairs and seven deans or associate deans representing all four deans' staffs. They help us recruit. We also have enrolled faculty leaders from academic governance committees, the Core Curriculum Committee, and other important campus groups.

Finally, **recruit volunteers only**--enforced participation may be grudging.

Injunction 5: Make Common Cause with Compatible Programs and Valuable Persons

In our situation, we formed what business folk would call interlocking directorates with the English Department Writing Committee, which oversees the required English composition sequence, and with the Writing Center. Three members of the Writing Committee and the Director of the Writing Center are also WAC staff members. The alliance helps develop a consistent philosophy of writing on campus and also to lobby more forcefully on behalf of writing and related issues. WAC, the Writing Center, and the Writing Committee collectively have, for example lobbied for, then worked closely with an emerging campus skills center, the Education Enhancement Program. We are currently working together to improve computer support for writing.

Two of our WAC staff are computer/math specialists, providing us assistance in designing a projected computer writing center and also, as you will hear in the third paper, assistance in program evaluation--important for our own formative guidance and for securing continuing institutional support.

One of our WAC staff is a reading specialist, providing a bridge to campus reading programs and opportunity for broadening our own program.

We are currently conducting a survey of all faculty development efforts on campus in the hope of forming a consortium to share some programming and resources.

Injunction 6: Advertise Shamelessly:

Put out a newsletter. Write dazzling annual reports. Invite the campus public relations people to photograph and publicize your faculty workshops. Send Deans invitations to your workshops. Get a logo. Call yourselves WACos. Make your presence felt.

Injunction 7: Formulate Program Goals Consistent with Constituents' Goals and Overall Institutional Mission

Without in any way compromising legitimate WAC goals, indeed by trumpeting them, show both participating faculty and funding administrators how WAC interests advance their interests.

Just a few of many, many possible examples:

1. **First, the appeal to individual faculty**: We ask individual faculty participants, **"How can we help you achieve your teaching objectives?"** Some of the exercises in our seminars invite participants to articulate their objectives; others introduce a variety of writing-to-learn ideas from which the individual can select those best suited to objectives and to personal teaching style. The second paper on this panel presents one case in detail. A faculty member dissatisfied with results of a writing assignment conventionally used in his discipline revised his approach in order to accomplish his objective more effectively-- and, as you will hear, kept revising and kept learning.

Also, WAC counters burnout. We say to individual faculty, "Are you feeling burned out? bored? Find renewal in a collegial forum on teaching [a subject discussed, pre-WAC, almost exclusively in the threatening context of promotion and tenure reviews]. Share teaching frustrations and explore solutions with your colleagues from around the campus. Find renewal also by listening to your students in different ways. Try informal writing exercises. Try small group exercises." Our evaluations, like those reported by Fulwiler ("How Well Does Writing Across the Curriculum Work") and others show positive affective responses both to collegiality and to hearing student voices in new ways. We are hearing cross-disciplinary pedagogical conversations in the faculty dining room at lunchtime. We

have encouraged classroom research projects and collaborative faculty scholarly activity on writing pedagogy to keep the WAC spirit alive after the training year.

Incidentally, **individual faculty renewal sells well to our funding administrators as well.** Rider, by contract, has no tenure quotas. That is one of many features which makes it an attractive place to work and makes for relatively low faculty turnover. Potential problem? Stagnation in a low-turnover context with a high percentage of long-term faculty. The academic vice president who originally negotiated the no-quota provision in the early 1970's envisioned faculty development programs as the solution. Before WAC, they hadn't happened. WAC was well positioned, then, to say in the mid-80's, here we are--as your long-term faculty reach middle-age--offering renewal.

WAC also helps integrate new faculty. We are finding department chairs who have been in WAC recommending WAC participation to newcomers as a way to enter campus life and, especially to new Ph.D.'s, as a way to gain teaching confidence.

2. Second, Wac enters into Partnerships to work toward School goals: An example: our School of Business has, historically, been the best-known division of the College. Rider was founded in 1865 as a business school; not until the 20th century did it become a comprehensive college. One third of our full-time faculty and two-thirds of our 3100 undergraduates are in business. It behooves WAC to cultivate good relations with the School of Business. And indeed, Business has proven to be our strongest constituent. We have come together at a time when the larger business community is demanding graduates with good communication skills. Many business associations, among them the American Institute for Certified Public Accountants and the National Association of Accountants, have made explicit policy statements calling for improved education in communication. WAC can help you, we tell our business departments. Six of 15 full-time Accounting faculty, for example, have been in the program. Three of the six (and another who has left Rider) have published articles and given workshops at national meetings on writing in accounting. One conference paper won an innovative education award at a regional Decision Sciences Institute.

Business faculty have given presentations to the Rider Business Advisory Board on their WAC courses. A WAC faculty member in our first group won the first Business Advisory Board Award for Teaching Innovation with the model course he developed in our seminar. Faculty winners of the second and third years' awards and most of the nominees were also WAC faculty. The BAB Committee on Innovation has formally endorsed the WAC program.

The School of Business has cited on WAC in support of its application for accreditation by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business. In support of its claim of good teaching, it cites emphasis on communication skills teaching innovations deriving in part

from WAC (about which more from our third panelist), and pedogogical scholarship deriving from WAC.

WAC and the School of Business have made a happy marriage.

3. As for WAC partnership in achieving college-wide goals-- Example1: integration with another institution. Rider College is in process of merging with Westminster Choir College in Princeton. For WAC the merger offers another opportunity to embrace an institutional goal. The Rider Academic Vice President was receptive to extending the full-year faculty training program for an additional year with the idea that blending Westminster and Rider faculty in WAC seminars would be a positive way to build collegial bonds between the two faculties.

A second example of supporting institutional goals: Rider is in process of developing a new all-College Core Curriculum to replace separate School cores. One thrust of the proposed new core is to develop in all students the generic skills of writing, reading, speaking, listening, computation, and critical thinking. The WAC program is already in process of developing a carefully structured writing-intensive course program. We have offered, following the direction taken by Barbara Walvoord in her Loyola program, to assume leadership in faculty workshops addressing critical thinking.

Thus, thorough understanding of the institutional setting and perceiving multiple ways in which constituent and whole-institutional goals might converge with WAC goals can help to gain continuing support and to institutionalize WAC programs.

Our injunctions sound, perhaps, opportunistic and a bit cynical. I used Dale Carnegie's "Winning Friends and Influencing People" with self-protective irony. But, really, I am unapologetic.

Why?

First, a good many WAC people struggling to start programs on the periphery of traditional institutional structures (read "established budget units"--Schools, Departments, and the like) are Don or Dona Quixotes of the curriculum-- idealistic and selfless believers in writing-to-learn. Program-building, especially in this era of tight budgets, tends to be on their backs--and the backs of those they coax into their programs. For self-protection as well as for program success, make alliances unashamedly with powerful people and campus issues to get your program a hearing, respect, and funding.

This raises the issue of accommodation--what gave Booker T. Washington increasingly negative responses to his Atlanta address (now getting rehabilitated?). In a recent College English article ("Writing Utopias: Writing Across the Curriculum and the Promise of Reform," Nov. 1991), Daniel Mahala chides leading American WAC spokespersons and theorists--Maimon, Fulwiler, and others--for selling out, or at least blurring, the radical

reformist promises of the original British language across the curriculum movement by accommodating to existing university power structures. Mehala deplores the conventional WAC metaphor of naturalizing citizens to disciplinary discourse--instead of the British notion of opening discourse to non-"disciplined" voices. By supporting disciplinary goals, he argues, WAC is self-servingly non-threatening. The American WAC which Mahala criticizes for theoretical shuffling, for going along to get along, is precisely the WAC I have described and advocated. "We can help you accomplish your goals."

But I am not urging WAC leaders to sell out. A little of a Dona Quixote myself, I believe that WAC can help our constituents accomplish goals--and that many existing constituent goals are worth accomplishing and that WAC can help constituents redefine or add other goals.

Furthermore, it is arrogant to assume that "established" units are ipso facto regressive or authoritarian. Among other things, WAC stands for hearing multiple voices, for process orientation in learning, for dialogic construction of meaning. That practice involves listening. Each of our disciplinary constituents offers a different discourse context from which we WAC people can learn. And each is rich and complex. Mahala regrets the false impression given by some cross-curricular rhetoric textbooks that disciplinary discourse is rigid, monolithic. But those textbooks are constructed by us--by WAC people--and they do not, indeed as compilations of representative texts primarily for freshmen, cannot, demonstrate the actual richness and ferment in disciplinary discourses. One of our Rider WAC seminar exercises asks participants to bring a representative piece of professional writing from their discipline which they would wish good senior majors to emulate; each participant annotates the text to point out its rhetorical features to the rest of us. Over and over, participants have emphasized the difficulty of selecting one representative piece and delight in selecting pieces "on the edge" where disciplinary boundaries or conventions are being challenged.

"I work on the border between history and sociology," says a sociologist, "so I like this kind of offbeat piece."

"Look at this geologist having the nerve to speak in first person within the conventional scientific format," says a geologist.

"Here is an accountant speaking in informal style--that's because he's so well known he can get away with it."

I knew the dialogue was going to be fun when at our first introductory workshop one of our accounting professors freewrote a poem beginning, "Hey, Dude!" Now I've co-authored papers with that accountant, and I have learned how one can and can't begin articles in accounting education journals (not with "Hey, Dude!")--and also how one can press against the conventions in those journals.

In sum, WAC leaders can learn from conversing about constituents' needs and goals. WAC understanding and our own program goals can, in their turn, be sharpened or redefined through the dialoguing process. If we, like Washington's experienced captain, can signal our constitutents where to find fresh water--in pedagogically renewing dialogue with colleagues and students--so too can we WAC folk cast down our buckets where we are--in the rich and multiple rhetorical contexts of our own institutions--and find life-giving support.

The results of our campus-wide dialogues have been so satisfactory that, together, WAC staff, English Department, joint College-wide faculty/ administration Core Curriculum Committee have recommended that WAC be formally institutionalized by having writing requirements for graduation--beyond English composition--embedded in the disciplines and across the disciplines.

So, in conclusion, "Cast down your buckets where you are." Find your strategic situation on your organizational chart and allies within the particular political structures where you must chart your course. And best of luck in hauling up fresh water.

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